DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 316 CG 006 661

AUTHOR Thornburg, Hershel D.
TITLE Minority Youth Families: A Comparative Analysis of Attitude Between Self and Family.
INSTITUTION Arizona Univ., Tucson.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Disadvantagement; Disadvantaged Youth; *Dropout Prevention; Dropout Programs; Dropouts; *Educational Improvement; Educational Innovation; Educational Programs; *High School Students; *Minority Group Children; *Self Concept; Self Esteem; Self Evaluation; Youth

ABSTRACT

The self-concept of minority youth serves as the organizing focus for this paper. The various social and cultural forces which converge on this population are highlighted, as are the resulting deficiencies: (1) poor self-image; (2) frustration about high school; and (3) limited ability to communicate. A special program at the Casa Grande, Arizona Union High School has been designed to meet the specific needs of 43 of these youth, all of whom are 9th graders and are considered potential dropouts. The Tennessee Self Concept Scale was self-administered by the entire freshman class. Those students in the special academic program were found to be considerably more self critical and to devalue themselves as family members more than their peers. The results are discussed in terms of their usefulness both for better understanding these youths and for programming more effectively for them in the future. (TL)

ED056316

Minority Youth Families: A Comparative Analysis of Attitude Between Self and Family

Paper read at the 1971 Meeting of the Southwestern and Rocky Mountain Division of the AAAS, Tempe, Arizona

Dr. Hershel D. Thornburg
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85705

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

CG 006 661

Minority Youth Families: A Comparative Analysis of Attitude Between Self and Family

A great deal of interest has been generated within our educational systems in recent years concerning children and youth representative of socially, culturally, and educationally deprived backgrounds. Educators and psychologists have searched for ways of better understanding and meeting the special needs of such individuals. One consideration that has come out of such studies has been the "self-concept" of minority youth. It is with this particular personality characteristic that this paper concerns itself.

The self has been described as a "dynamic unity of the activities of sensing, remembering, imagining, perceiving, wanting, feeling, and thinking (Bartocci, 1965)." Self-concept may be thought of as one's own perception in relationship to his total personal and environmental milieu.

Self-concept is thought to begin emerging very early in life and it is usually influenced by three primary social cultural forces, namely: (a) peers within one's immediate social-cultural context, i.e., culturally disadvantaged others; (b) peers representative of a larger societal context, i.e., school mates, and (c) adult figures which represent the larger community, i.e., teachers.

Respective minority groups compose subcultures distinct from the parent culture and the values of such subcultures become part of the child's life style, contributing to his emerging self-concept. Research has been rather conclusive about the self-concepts of these children, with most findings pointing toward negative self-concepts (Coleman, et. al., 1966; Havighurst and Moorefield, 1967. One explanation has been

that children are reinforced for their behavior within their own group. An ally to such theory is expectancy. Since the general subcultural milieu is less aspirationaly and motivationaly oriented than the dominant culture, the expectancy level is typically not as high. Therefore, children appear to function well within their own group, but when thrown into a more heterogenous culture, their functioning is deficient, and thus, negative self-concepts emerge.

It is only fair to assert that such children are perceptual enough to recognize differences throughout their elementary experiences. As they progress through school, social class differences become more apparent, and youth become less sure about themselves as individuals. This causes many youth to enter high school with certain common, and identifable traits, such as: (a) poor self-image, (b) frustration about the impending academic program, (c) limited ability to communicate, and (d) a disallusionment that high school will be different than their elementary experiences (Cummings and Gillespie, 1971).

Most psychologists assert that self-concept is fairly well established by adolescence, and little shift, if any, comes slowly. Within the school program at the Casa Grande, Arizona Union High School, officials have not been satisfied to "give up" on its minority youth who enter high school with low self-concepts, low academic grades, low reading scores, low intelligence, low teacher ratings, and excessive absenteeism. Therefore, the 1968-69 academic year included a special program for potential minority youth dropouts. My involvement as an evaluator has begun with the current academic year. This paper reports only a small portion of the data thus far accumulated on the project, but interestingly enough, it gives us a working point from which to adapt and improve special programming.

Two hypotheses were formulated for reporting here:

1. There will be no statistically significant difference between the positive self-concept score and the self-criticism score of potential minority youth dropouts.
2. There will be no statistically significant difference between the positive self-concept score and the family concept score of potential minority youth dropouts.

School Placement

There were 441 freshmen who began the 1970-71 school year at Casa Grande. While the majority population is white (See Table 1), 56.7% there are also considerable numbers of students from the Mexican-American, Indian, and Black minority groups.

Youth were placed in three different programs: (a) a special academic class consisting of English and math; (b) vocational classes consisting of home economics for girls and shop-agriculture for the boys; and (c) the regular academic program. Table 1 also indicates the breakdown of students within each program. In addition, Table 2 is presented so you may see the proportions that each group contributes to the three aforementioned programs.

Method

Subjects

There were a total of 43 ninth grade students selected for the special academic program, 28 males and 15 females. These were randomly selected from a pool of 168 students considered to be potential dropouts. The criteria for being termed "potential dropout" was (a) scores on the Academic Promise Test, (b) eighth grade teacher recommendations, (c) academic grades, (d) attendance, and (e) ethnic group (Cummings and Gillespie, 1971; Thornburg, 1970).

Table 1

An Enrollment Analysis of Freshman Students in the Casa Grande Union High School According to Academic Program and Minority Group

	Special Academic		Vocational		Regular		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
White	13	30.0	32	25.6	205	75.1	250	56.7
Mexican American	17	40.0	58	46.4	37	13.6	112	25.4
Indian	7	16.0	22	17.6	25	9.1	54	12.2
Black	6	14.0	13	10.4	5	1.8	24	5.4
Oriental	0		0		1	0.4	1	0.3
Totals	43	100.0	125	100.0	273	100.0	441	100.0

Table 2

An Enrollment Analysis of Freshman Students in the Casa Grande Union High School Within Minority Groups According to Acamedic Program

	Special Academic	Vocational	Regular
White (N=250	5.2	12.8	82.0
Mexican-American (N=42)	15.2	51.8	33.0
Indian (N=54)	13.0	40.7	46.3
Black (N=24)	25.0	54.2	20.8
Oriental (N=1)			100.0

Instrument

The instrument reported within this paper is the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, designed to give some measure of an individual's self-concept. The scale consists of 100 self-descriptive statements which the subject uses to portray his own perception of himself (Fitts, 1965). The scale is self-administering and can be used with subjects age 12 or above.

The scale is broken into several subscales. Three such subscales are of special interest here. First is the Self-Criticism Score. This scale includes mildly derogatory statements that most people admit as being true for them. Denial of such items indicates defensiveness. High scores generally indicate a normal, health capacity for self-criticism. Low scores indicate defensiveness and may distort the results of the entire test.

The second scale being considered is the Positive Score. This score is the single most important score on the test and it reflects the overall level of self-esteem. Its items focus around (a) What I am, (b) how I feel about myself, and (c) what I do. The third score reported here is the Family Self Score. This score reflects one's feelings of adequacy, worth, and value as a family member. Thus, it refers to the individual's perception of self in reference to his closest and most immediate circle of associates.

To obtain these scale scores students were given the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale as entering freshmen the third week of September. Norms for the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale are reported as T-scores with a mean of 50 and a standard of 10. Such scores were computed on his basis as well as figuring the percentile at which each subscale score fell.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and differences between the means (students t-test) on the three subscales were computed to see (a) how high risk minority

potential dropouts self-concepts compare with the norm scores on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and (b) how such subtest scores compared with each other. Table 3 indicates the results.

These 43 students had a mean t-score of 47.39 (42nd percentile) on the Self-Criticism Scale. This score was just below the mean and it could be concluded that these youth have a respectable tendency toward openess and capacity for self-criticism.

In contrast these youth were much lower on the Positive Score subscale. Here the t-score was 38.46, a score which falls at the 12th percentile. This finding is considerably below the established norms for the test. Such a score indicates a lack of personal feeling of value and worth, lack of confidence in one's self, and a personal dislike for one's self. When the t-test was run between the self-criticism score and the positive score, the derived ratio was 4.19, which exceeds the table value at the .01 level of confidence. We could conclude that the students were more self-critical than positive.

As in the case of the Positive Score, students were also extremely low on the Family Self Score. The mean was 35.97 (7th percentile) which is decisively low for the total group. This indicates minimal recognition by youth as to their adequacy, worth, and value as a family member. A t-test was run between this scale and the positive subscale. The t-ratio was 2.74 also significant at the .01 level. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected with a significant difference being recognized. We might conclude that these youth had a significantly more positive attitude toward their total self than they did toward themselves as a family member.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-Ratios on Selected Scales of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale Among Minority Youth Freshman Enrolled in Special Academic Classes

	t-score	S.D.	t-Ratio
Self-criticism (N=43)	47.39	8.26	4.19*[1]
Positive Self (N=43)	38.46	10.14	2.74*[2]
Family Self (N=43)	35.97	11.16	

* Student's t distribution at p> .01, 42df, 2.704. (Kirk, R.E., Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences. Belmont, California: Brooks/Cole, 1968, p. 523

[1] t-Ratio was run between the self-criticism score and the positive self score.

[2] t-Ratio was run between the positive self score and the family self score.

Conclusions

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale only gives us a fragmentary picture of the total attitudinal system of potential dropouts from minority groups. It is safe to say, however, that the results reported herein point toward a high degree of self-negativism. In addition, it implies that something other than regular classroom programming may be necessary if these youth are to (a) remain in school, and (b) experience any attitude shift.

These students will be given a post-test on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale before school is out. This will allow us to see if any change in self-concept has occurred over an eight-month period of time while being in a special academic program. In addition, an attitude toward school measure has been given to these students on a pre- and post-test basis in order to

enlarge student profile. Change scores within the group and comparison scores with vocationally-placed and regularly-placed students will increase our understanding of these youth in relationship to various school programs. Results will be used toward better understanding and more effective programming to meet the needs of these students in subsequent school years.

References

1. Bartocci, P. A. The psychological self, the ego, and personality. In D. E. Hamachek (ed.) The self in growth. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965, pp 14-26

2. Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J. McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weingeld, F. D. and York, R. L. Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.

3. Cummings, R. and Gillespie, M. E. Dropouts among the disadvantaged. Arizona Teacher, 1971, 59 (3), 12, 21, 29.

4. Fitts, W. H. Manual, Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Nashville: Counselor Recordings, 1965

5. Havighurst, R. J. and Moorefield, T. E. The disadvantaged in industrial cities. The Educationally retarded and disadvantaged, 1967, 66 (Part I), 8-20

6. Thornburg, H. D. An investigation of attitudes among potential dropouts from minority groups during their freshman year in high school. The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1970-1971.